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ABSTRACT

This summary of Council for Educational Technology (CET) activities begins by describing supported self-study, which is offered to secondary school pupils so that they will become more actively involved in the learning processes; find their work more adaptable to their individual needs; and learn how to become more responsible for their own learning. The benefits of supported self-study for pupils, teachers, schools, and local education agencies are outlined, and the three elements considered essential for the support of self-study--i.e., tutoring, resources and management--are discussed in detail. The dates and types of activities involved in three phases of a CET project are noted. This information sheet concludes with descriptions of resources on supported self-study, including publications that have resulted from the project, and a selected bibliography. (DJR)

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# Information Sheet 12

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# Supported Self-Study

## What is Supported Self-Study?

Supported self-study is offered to secondary school pupils so that:

* they will become more actively involved in the learning process;
* they will find their work is more adapted to their individual needs;
* they will learn how to become more responsible for their own learning

It provides an essential preparation for the 'Open Learning' opportunities which pupils will meet when they have left school: in industrial or professional training; in further and higher education. It is their introduction to 'lifelong education'.

Supported self-study can also help a school to protect some minority activities which might otherwise have to be abandoned if numbers are too low.

Supported self-study is often associated with more flexible arrangements in the organisation of learning: new patterns for the school day; different kinds of groupings; alternative timetables. These arrangements are increasingly made for older pupils, especially in those schools involved in recent curriculum initiatives.

But it also operates usefully within the normal timetable and class arrangements, particularly with the larger classes of the lower school. Schools have often called this resource-based learning, but the emphasis in supported self-study is on the **management** and **tutoring** as well as on resources.

So these are the three essentials of supported self-study; three different kinds of **support:**

| | |
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| **RESOURCES** | specially chosen to support the independent learner |
| **TUTORING** | provided regularly and usually organised in small groups |
| **MANAGEMENT** | designed to provide a disciplined framework. |

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## What Supported Self-Study is NOT

**It is NOT a 'do-it-yourself' system of education - manage without a teacher!**

**The teacher's role is more important than ever. This is supported .....self-study; NOT self-supported.....study!!**

It is NOT a demand that pupils should always work on their own!

**Independence and isolation are not synonymous.**

It is NOT a narrowly focussed prescription of learning materials, whether in the form of worksheets, computer programs, or any other!

**Learning resources must be rich and varied**

It is NOT a stand-alone system to be operated separately from other teaching!

**A good education depends on a broad repertoire of teaching skills.**

## The Benefits of Supported Self-Study

**For the pupils**

- They are progressively trained to accept responsibility for their own learning.
- They are able to **practise** their study skills, learning them 'on the job'.
- Their learning tasks are adapted to their individual needs, both academic and personal.

**For the teachers**

- Their time can be used more flexibly. When their pupils are more independent they may be able to devote more time to curriculum planning, to assessment, and to staff development. (See DES. 'Better Schools', paragraph 152. March 1985).

- They can adopt new personal styles, tutorial rather than didactic.

**For the school**

- It can respond with greater sensitivity to the special needs of individual pupils and all kinds of minority groups.

- It can protect minority subjects which are at risk when the pupil numbers are falling. It may not be able to justify full allocations of teacher time to very small groups, but it can offer a viable and educational alternative through supported self-study.

**For the LEA**

- It can promote supported self-study as a way of implementing the 'personal-development' objectives which are important themes in the new curriculum and assessment initiatives (notably in CPVE and TVEI).

- It can promote supported self-study, as an aid for schools struggling to maintain broad curricula in spite of falling rolls.

# Resources

Resources for pupils on supported self-study schemes need to be chosen with care. The pupils are likely to spend more time working directly from the resources without detailed control from the teacher. So the resources must help the pupil to work independently, and this means that they must help the pupil in matters of organisation and also provide a source of motivation.

It is a rare experience for a teacher to find materials which are thought to be just right in every respect. As a result there is a strong temptation to start production in school, on the grounds that the materials so created will be tailor-made to the needs of the pupils. This is a temptation which should be resisted most of the time. Producing good resource material is a time-consuming task, to such an extent that other important matters are bound to be neglected.

But the teacher has an important role: it is to select the components and to organise them so that they serve a common purpose. This may involve some writing as well as organising; but the bulk of the writing and design work will have already been done elsewhere.

A self-study package will consist of some or all of the following components.

1. **A structured course.**

   This would have at least some of the following characteristics:

   - arranged in **short** 'blocks', 'units', or 'chapters';
   - clear statements of objectives for each section of the course;
   - a clear logical structure in the text - headings and sub-headings;
   - concisely written;
   - careful sequencing of information and tasks;
   - skilful use of typography to make comprehension easier;
   - use of diagrams to clarify concepts and ideas;
   - an interactive text, so that the pupil is involved;
   - things to do, problems to solve;
   - references to other works to be used;
   - self-assessment questions so that the pupil can check his own progress.

The main sources of structured courses are the commercial publishers, many of whom have adopted these styles for their school textbooks. Some have introduced whole series devoted to the needs of the independent student, and the best are a big improvement on the old-style 'crammers'. Correspondence Colleges are also prepared to sell their materials to schools for pupils on self-study assignments.

**2. Unstructured resource material.**

This provides additional data and stimuli. It serves to broaden and enrich the pupil's work. It complements the structured course which, by itself, may be too narrow and prescriptive. It often includes:

- written materal of an evocative style;
- well-chosen visual illustration;
- material that appeals to the heart as well as the head;
- material that suggests practical applications of the new knowledge;
- material that is people-oriented.

The sources of these unstructured materials are numerous and varied. This is a good occasion to seek the help of the school librarian or schools library service. In order to provide a rich collection, a wide variety of media should be sought.

**3. Guidelines (often called 'task cards', or 'assignments').**

These perform a number of useful jobs. They state the objectives, direct the pupil to the right learning materials, set the tasks, pose problems for solving, and suggest things to do. They also advise about styles and presentation, and about the organisation of the work. They may refer to a number of different sources of learning material; but they do not normally provide the data or stimuli themselves. These will almost certainly have to be produced by the teacher, with the needs of the individual pupils in mind.

**4. List of background reference materials.**

The pupil needs to have this list in order to have alternative explanations, different examples, interesting extensions. Presumably these materials will be housed in a central library or resource centre, and it will be necessary to check that they are accessible.

**5. Test materials.**

A full test bank might contain the following:

- a pre-test which helps to determine the pupil's readiness for the course
- self-assessment questions which form an integral part of a structured course;
- tests which enables the teacher to make assessments of the pupil's work at various stages in the course.

The five components of a self-study package may be combined within the covers of a single book or folder. Or they may have to be assembled from a number of different sources. Some packages may contain some, but not all, of the five.

# Tutoring

Tutoring in supported self-study is so important that it deserves prolonged investigation and experiment. It is the key to successful practice. If it is done badly or inadequately the ambitions of growth and self-development will not be achieved.

## The Importance of Tutoring

The performance of pupils as learners is as much due to their personalities as to their intelligence. And their personalities develop through their interaction with other people. A teacher can be such a powerful force for good, by encouraging the pupils, talking to them personally and privately, in calm and supportive ways. In these ways the pupils grow more confident, more responsible, more rational; and they become more true to themselves.

Many of our pupils are in great need of help at a personal level. Counselling may help them with crises of a physical or emotional nature, but they also need the same kind of help in relation to their academic studies. Subject teaching must be viewed more as a helping activity, and less as a delivery system for packaged knowledge and ideas.

Tutoring in supported self-study offers to teachers the opportunity to establish learning conversations with their pupils, in which they are helped to be aware of their own development, and to identify for themselves how they might extend the range of their understanding.

## A Model Tutorial Session

There are no hard and fast rules in tutoring, and a model may appear to be a prescriptive way of approaching such a delicate responsibility. The approach has been chosen because it allows description in practical and concrete terms, so that teachers can easily envisage how the occasion might work out in practice.

The model is expressed as a sequence of events during a tutorial. But they are not really discrete events which always occur in this particular order. There is much overlapping.

Teachers will probably prefer to tutor in small groups. Some of the time is spent talking to the group as a whole; the rest is spent dealing with individuals, with the remainder of the group observing and helping. Handled in a sensitive way, this form of group tutoring can be very beneficial for all members of the group.

The CET teachers' handbook (**Supported self-study: a handbook for teachers**) suggests ten steps in a 'model' tutoring session.

1. Re-establish and strengthen the personal relationship.
2. Invite them to present their own review and evaluation of work completed.
3. Teacher review and evaluation.
4. Invite responses from the pupils.
5. Stimulate interest in the new work which is about to be started.
6. Help the pupils to create an "advance organiser" of the subject matter.
7. Help each pupil to make a plan of work.
8. Adapt the guidance to the known abilities, interests and styles of the pupils.
9. Summarise.
10. Get each pupil to give his own summary.

The model is, of course, an idealised one. But it gives the teacher something to strive for. It should be adapted to suit the needs of individual pupils and the styles and priorities of the teacher.

## Management

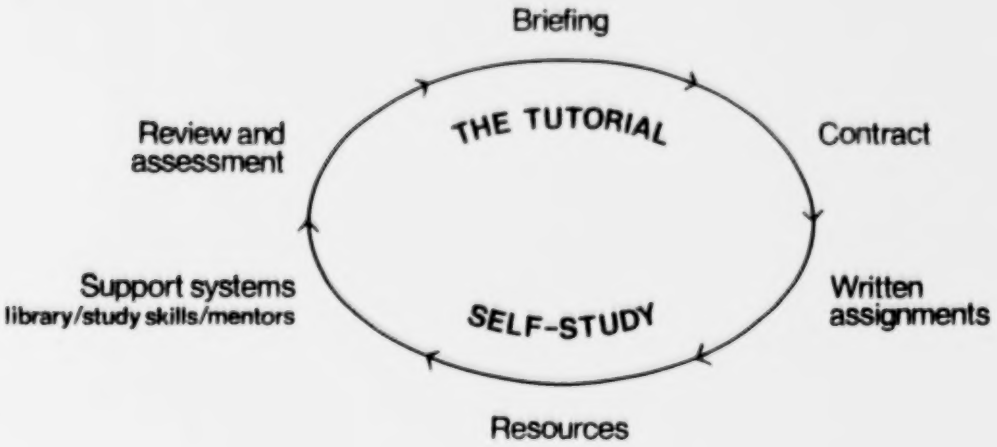
Good sensitive tutoring needs to be complemented by the firm support of a good management style. Supported self-study is not a blind act of faith, giving young people responsibility before they are ready for it; it is a careful and progressive build-up of the techniques and capabilities towards the goal of autonomous learner. So the arrangements need to be tailored to the stage of development of each individual learner.

1. Arrangements are made to accomodate pupils when they are doing private study; for example, by an increase of study areas within and adjacent to the library, or by the use of designated rooms or spaces within departmental areas. Dispersal is often a good strategy.

2. It is not feasible or even desirable that pupils should be tutored individually. So divisions of a class are established for the purposes of tutoring. The optimum size of a division is about five, but up to eight can be accommodated. Where the teacher is timetabled for a class this means that when one group is being tutored the other groups are engaged on self-study assignments. So it is wise to keep the number of divisions down to four or less. For example, a large lower school class might be organised into four divisions of seven or eight pupils; a small option class in the upper school might work well in three divisions of six or seven pupils; a very small option class in a minority subject might be tutored as a whole.

3. Decisions should be made about the desirability or the necessity for some non-contact time. This is time which is timetabled for the pupils but not for the teacher. Clearly it is not appropriate for a large class. But a decision may be made that senior pupils should be given the opportunities for responsibility that a well-managed scheme of supported self-study provides. Equally, where the number of pupils in an option group falls to very low levels it seems both economically and educationally desirable that they should regard some of their time allocation as self-study time. Everything hinges on the quality of the control.

4. Management is essentially about control. Young learners need help in establishing disciplined routines, and the teacher needs to be fully informed about progress, achievements, and difficulties. A clear management cycle will help meet these needs.




The importance of briefing and contract cannot be overemphasised. Young people need to have clear understanding of what is expected of them and how much discretion they are being given. In the early stages, at least, it may help to have a short written contract for each learning assignment.

# The CET Project

| | | |
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| Phase 1: | 1981 - 1983 | A general survey of existing needs and practice. |
| Phase 2: | 1983 - 1985 | Intensive experiments in selected schools. |
| Phase 3: | April 1985 to December 1986 | Support for local authority staff development programmes in supported self-study. |

## 1. Publications:

**Working Paper 24. Supported Self-Study in Secondary Education**
This is aimed at decision makers in local authorities and schools.

Price £7

**Supported Self-Study: A Handbook for Teachers**
This is a practical handbook giving advice about setting up a scheme of supported self-study. Detailed guidance is offered on resources and on the techniques of tutoring. **Essential reading for schools setting up schemes.**

Price £9

Orders to: Council for Educational Technology, 3 Devonshire Street, London W1N 2BA. Do not enclose cash or cheque with the order. An invoice will be sent to cover cost, postage and packing.

**Encounters in Supported Self-Study**
This is a photocopied document based on the work of schools during Phase 2 of the Project.

Price £5
(Please send cheque with the order)

## 2. Training Materials

These are designed to support the development work undertaken by local authorities. They consist of resource material and working papers for use on training courses and as part of broader staff development programmes.

The Project has a termly newsletter. To be included on the Project's mailing list a registration form should be completed and sent to the Project Coordinator.

The Project cooperates with INSET providers throughout the country to arrange conferences and seminars.

The Project maintains a databank of all schools that are involved in supported self-study. This is helpful to teachers who wish to make contact with colleagues doing similar work.

## 3. Other Support

Other publications of CET have a direct or indirect bearing on supported self-study. Of special interest is the new series of Open Learning Guides. Full catalogue available from CET, 3 Devonshire Street, London W1N 2BA.

CET News is a most useful way of keeping up to date in educational technology. The Newsletter is available free from CET, 3 Devonshire Street, London W1N 2BA.

The Open Learning movement is worth following. It concentrates on the further education sector, but there is a lot of common ground, and keeping in touch with what is happening there can help illuminate our own problems and opportunities. During the last few years considerable experience has been built up.

OLS News, a newsletter about open learning systems, is published four times a year. An annual subscription to the newsletter costs £7.50 (UK & Eire), £7.80 sterling (overseas). Price includes postage and packing. For further information contact Lee Wilcock, CET, Suite 3, 48a The Avenue, Southampton SO1 2SY.

The Open Learning Federation is a network of colleges actively participating in Open Learning. Details of membership from Martin Emerson, Open Learning Unit, West London Institute of Higher Education, Lancaster House, Borough Road, Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 5DU.

Details of the Open Tech Programme from Open Tech Programme News, Room E824, Manpower Services Commission, Moorfoot, Sheffield S1 4PQ.

## 4. Other work which has a bearing on supported self-study

a) IT and Information Skills. **Learning Information Technology Skills** by Carolyn Carter and Jenny Monaco, presents the findings of an investigation carried out during 1984-85 of how various forms of IT are being used to help develop information skills in schools, and the relationship between the skills used to exploit printed matter and those used to exploit information technology. This report, LIR 54, will be available from the British Library from Autumn '86.

   The development activity case-studies describe and analyse the use of IT in a variety of information skills activities. Illustrative teaching/learning materials and ideas for using the studies in staff development programmes and training workshops will also be available. Publication details to be announced.

b) The National Interactive Video Centre. This serves as a focal point for information and advice to users and producers of interactive video in education and training. Contact Angus Doulton, NIVC, 27 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JS. 01-935 8190.

c) NFER and the British Library have both promoted the ideas of independent learning. Contact Sharon Markless, Liaison Officer for Information Skills, NFER, The Mere, Upton Park, Slough, Berkshire SL1 2DQ.

## School Experiments in Supported Self-Study

A number of schools have provided case study material based on their work during the school year 1983-4. The experiments were designed in the schools themselves in response to their own aspirations, needs and problems. So they are varied in character and scale, but they reveal the range and power of supported self-study schemes.

These **Encounters in Supported Self-Study** have now been published. They should prove to be a rich source of information and guidance for the large number of schools and local authorities that are now interested and involved.

Meanwhile many more schools have become involved. Teachers wishing to make contacts should in the first place, direct their enquiries to their LEA. The CET Project coordinator is also willing to try.

## Local Authority Development Programmes

During Phase 3 of the CET Project a number of local authorities are mounting their own development programmes in supported self-study. The elements of a typical programme are described below.

1. **A coordinator.** An influential person, possibly supported by a small steering group, is designated.

2. **An introductory conference.** This is aimed at curriculum directors, resource centre organisers, etc from the schools. The conference is run on workshop lines with opportunity to have extended discussions with teachers already involved in supported self-study schemes.

3. **Small scale trials.** These are set up in a few schools. Small scale may mean no more than a single subject department operating a scheme with a small group of learners within one age group. Each trial is the subject of a firm agreement between the LEA and the teachers. The work of the teachers on these trials will be given some formal recognition in a publication or at a conference.

4. **Resources Support.** The LEA devotes some of its existing learning resources capability to helping the trial schools.

5. **INSET Support.** The LEA devotes some of its INSET budget to helping the trial schools.

6. **A Final Event or Publication.** This is regarded as an excellent way of appreciating the work that the teachers have been doing, and it provides a practical way of sharing experience.

7. **A CET Publication.** It is hoped that it will be possible to publish accounts of these local authority development programmes. Most are still in the early stages of life, and it is likely that the accounts will be ready during 1987.

During the lifetime of these developments CET will make available five kinds of support.

1. **Publications.** These have already been listed above.

2. **People.** CET is mounting a training programme for those teachers and others who have gained practical experience of supported self-study during Phase 2 of the Project. The intention is to help them respond effectively to requests to serve as lecturers, workshop leaders, and consultants.

3. **Training Materials.** These will take the form of case studies, model schemes, and workshop papers. They will be made freely available in exchange for feedback on their use.

4. **Consultancy.** The Project Coordinator is prepared to help in the planning and design of development programmes.

5. **Help with specific investigations in Information Technology.** Where a local authority has set up a development programme in which some of its schools are exploring the applications of IT in supported self-study the Project is giving practical help.

## A Selected Bibliography

A complete bibliography for Supported Self-Study would be a very large document. This bibliography is selective; many of the books themselves contain bibliographies which will help further investigation into specialist topics.

Readers in schools are reminded that most of the books about 'Open Learning' concentrate on the Further Education sector, although many of the principles and experiences are relevant to the schools.

Items marked with a * are recommended for those who need an introductory reading list.

**General**

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